

Cuba Trade Legislation Approved by Agriculture Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran issued the following statement today after the House Agriculture Committee approved H.R. 4645, legislation to expand agricultural trade with Cuba. Moran introduced H.R. 4645 in February with Congressman Collin Peterson, Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture.

“Today’s vote is a step in the right direction and a victory for America’s farmers and ranchers. Cuba must import nearly eighty-five percent of its food and current U.S. trade policies hurt American farmers and ranchers by making it more expensive for Cuba to purchase U.S. agriculture products. Instead of buying U.S. commodities, current policy encourages Cuba to buy its food from countries such as Vietnam and China. I have long fought for common sense changes to our trade policy with Cuba in order to open up markets only 90 miles away. This legislation will standardize our trade policies, increase export sales and create thousands of American jobs without increasing the deficit,” said Moran.

Nearly 150 U.S. organizations have voiced their strong support for H.R. 4645, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Association of Wheat Growers and the National Farmers Union.

“The Chamber supports efforts to broaden economic engagement with Cuba in the belief that additional commercial and people-to-people contacts will help advance democracy and the rule of law,” said U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President, Bruce Josten. “The U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) estimated in 2001 that the Cuba embargo costs American exporters up to \$1.2 billion annually in lost sales, and this sum has likely grown over the past nine years. Facilitating agricultural exports to Cuba would restore the natural competitive advantage of U.S. agricultural products in Cuba.”

“Lifting all travel restrictions will have a direct impact on U.S. agricultural sales,” said American Farm Bureau Federation President, Bob Stallman. “Increased travel to Cuba will boost food demand in the country, and coupled with other reforms, the U.S. industry will meet increased food needs. Increased travel will also bring much needed funds to purchase U.S. commodities, given that cash will remain the only means of payment.”

“We are long overdue to make common-sense changes to our policy concerning Cuba, which has done nothing but hamstringing agriculture’s competitiveness in this neighboring market and hurt our agricultural economy,” said National Association of Wheat Growers President, Jerry McReynolds, a Kansas wheat producer who testified to his experiences at a House Agriculture hearing held earlier this year. “Especially at this time of high wheat stocks and low harvest prices in states like mine, this is a major competitiveness issue that deserves a solution.”

“National Farmers Union thanks Congressman Moran for the hard work and leadership he exhibited with Chairman Peterson on the bipartisan effort to make this bill a reality. It is the right thing to do for America and the right thing to do for farmers and ranchers in Kansas and across the United States,” said Roger Johnson, National Farmers Union President.

Today's vote was instrumental in moving H.R. 4645 one step closer to consideration by the entire U.S. House of Representatives.

Moran is a senior member of the House Agriculture Committee.

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